

THE *GLOBE*'S TROUBLES | PEDDLING PILLS TO THE STATES

MACLEAN'S

CANADA'S WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE | www.macleans.ca

NOVEMBER 1 2004

THE WAR NEXT DOOR

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CANADA



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MACLEAN'S



For David Johnston, the campaign is about to get down to the wire

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OUR RIGHT TO BE NOSY

Of course, Americans don't like us poking into their affairs. But we should anyway.

IN CALIFORNIA recently, my wife and I witnessed several instances of what seemed—to me at the time—happier than their reputation—to be an emerging trend. It consists of groups of people gathered together, voices raised, arms waving—all the while in perfect and peaceful agreement with each other. The topic invariably was politics, thus being the great controversy of California, that racist Democrats, each trying to outdo each other in

making the same point. This version extends all that emotion directed toward common cause seemed warranted. But that's a bipartisan problem: a friend who was in Texas a while ago encountered the same phenomenon in reverse, with Republicans doing the venting, and not a Democrat in sight.

Such is life in the United States these days: Democrats and Republicans talk about, or at, but seldom to each other. Supporters of the two parties live separate lives side by side, like an estranged couple forced to stay in the same house until the lawyers or judge determine who gets possession. The only occasion when the two sides meet again is at their politically expedient and/or essential—such as in the presidential debates, or in a controversial media event—for example, when the CNN campaign bus in fact by placarding supporters of both parties at each stop as it bounces its way across America.

With the Nov. 2 vote approaching, you are evidence internationally of a preference that showed up when we polled Canadians earlier this year: many people in countries considered traditionally U.S. allies don't want George W. Bush re-elected. In a new poll we publish this week (p. 32), Canadian respondents prefer John Kerry to Bush by a margin of 54 to 36 per cent. In another recent poll of people in 10 countries, a strong majority in eight preferred Kerry to Bush (the two exceptions were Israel and Russia). That's not necessarily bad news for Bush, whose left-leaning British newspaper the *Guardian* invited readers to share their thoughts and votes on the newspaper's Obama week (p. 22), an effort, to argue them to vote for Kerry, the much less a deluge of stream mail from Americans saying Bin Laden, in most popular terms, to butt out. [No sur-
prise: *Maclean's* invariably receives more

“
The two parties live separate lives side by side, like an estranged couple forced to stay in the same house

diary email from Bush supporters in the U.S. whenever we run an item of this.]

There's nothing surprising about the fact that Americans, like Canadians, aren't impressed by the idea of outsiders toiling them down to believe. But with that in mind, Canadians shouldn't be offended by U.S.

Ambassador Paul Galtman, who said last week that Canada is an obvious staging ground for terrorists seeking entry into the U.S.—and that the Canadians should understand the negative consequences on relations with the States if that should happen. There would be—and we need to consider that. As for the U.S., as the world's superpower, it regularly announces itself as an ally of other nations. In the words of U.S. Sen. Al Franken, a U.S. and Israeli citizen living in Toronto: “U.S. politics is not just domestic, it's international. Not just Americans in Canada are interested in this election, Canadians are watching because most make how important the U.S. is to Canada.” He, by the way, is voting for Bush. Our campaign coverage, led by Jonathan Gershovitz in Ottawa, begins on page 18.

Anthony Wilson-Smith

antonw@maclean.ca or comment on The Editor's Letter

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Canada's national news magazine

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Anthony Wilson-Smith

Executive Editor

David G. McLean

Managing Editor

Michael J. Smith

Senior Editor

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MICHAEL WALTRIP
two-time Daytona 500 champion (2001 & 2003)

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In the study of international relations, I'm inspired by his determination to travel to a region synonymous with terrorism in order to explore our misconceptions. Trudeau is a prime example of the will to overcome misunderstanding, and foster calm passions and love.

Eric Hall, London, Ont.

Alexandre Trudeau's article on the Chetumal area is reminiscent of one of the most gruesome terrorist acts in the history of humankind. He portrays those who shoot children as nice people who live in a "sanctified" forest with "nothing of the savagery of Berlin." The Chetumal conflict is complicated, with many wrongdoings by the Mexican side (which should be investigated and persecuted). But what Trudeau does is internationally supported terrorism, for which your article virtually serves as an advertisement.

Isidoro Luyckens, Vancouver

Thank you for publishing Alexandre Trudeau's work—please continue. Thank you to Trudeau for living and writing with his brave courageous choices in today's acting and writing world.

Suzanne Kiefer, Richmond, B.C.

Democracy under debate

As a dual Canadian/U.S. citizen, I am especially concerned with American politics ("The confidantes debate: as Iraq turns bloody," *Cipriani, Oct. 11*). I don't believe that, with his mind, George W. Bush will have the support he has. I have to feel that our democracy has to be a reflection on the intelligence of every American.

Ray Kott, Toronto

I don't think you can believe a word George W. Bush says, and I doubt John Kerry is much different.

Henry McCulland-Papp, Winnipeg, Ont.

I wish we had a prime minister like George W. Bush—a man with strong moral convictions and the courage to act on them.

Talissa Johnson, Los Angeles, Calif.

After following international politics for 30 years, I find that those the first U.S. election that could directly affect my personal well-being. With the range of current war national



They gets the nod in our mailbox, but one writer wishes for a PM with the President's mobility.

intimidation, I am certain that a careful, measured, multifaceted approach is needed. This is the substance of what George W. Bush has delivered over the past four years.

David Smith, Victoria

As or not to user fees?

Brief! It was great to read what should have been written many years ago: Canada needs to look at the way European countries deliver health care and realize that there is a middle ground between the U.S. and Canadian systems ("Seying to us: user fees," *Pellissier, Oct. 11*). I don't know if user fees are the answer (again Germany) as parallel private and public systems (France) or a public system complemented with private insurance coverage (Switzerland), but I do know that politicians owe it to us to

closely examine those systems.

Clair Gannon, Montreal, Ont.

Paul Wells outlines how the German government introduced a PDS user fee to try to control escalating health care costs. And guess what? Disease visits declined. The conclusion he reaches is that

user fees reduce unnecessary doctor visits, but it's not that simple. How many of those people didn't see a doctor because they couldn't afford to? How many people put off seeking treatment and then ended up costing the system more because they were sicker when they finally went to the doctor?

Sam Korman, Delta, B.C.

Scientific scaremongering

David Suzuki is concerned that "people just do not hear what scientists are telling them" about the health of the planet (*The Midwestern interview, Oct. 4*). Over the past three decades we have been warned of the imminent approach of another ice age, that we were going to run out of oil, that our forests would be devastated by acid rain—all false predictions. So maybe there's a reason why some scientists are not listened to.

Rob Jorgensen, Portland, Ore.

Thinking outside the box

Thank you for Steve Mach's story "Right of life" (*Living, Oct. 11*). I have never been a boxing fan, but this story brought tears to my eyes. The boxer's determination to make his mark—even a small mark—after all his past disappointments was truly inspiring. I urge you to keep finding stories like these, about ordinary Canadians doing extraordinary things.

David Haylett, Quakertown, Ont.

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ScoreCard



THE PLAYERS

They lack, dying to get on CBC's top 10 Greatest Canadian list? It helps. Seven are dead white males: Wilfong, Grizzly and Don Cherry are flash-frozen by NPR, locked out. As for women, sorry ladies. Seems some people like HGTV's *Interior*



JOE CAPULE

Things to expect now that Celine Dion is voice of rejuvenated online better headphones to handle multi-octave assault on the earbuds: "Celine sized service" to make food carts, cheap flights to Vegas.



PHILIP ELLIOTT

Venerable 84-year-old author, translator and former Maclean's managing editor's demise strikes proper way to rail a junk on Rick Mercer's TV show *Monday Report*. Wash, duke, suddenly *The National*! Dream has whole new meaning.



MITCHELL THOMAS

popular TV's. Gone with the key chain to shut off intrusive TVs in bars and casinos. Also to promote conversion—such as: “Hey @!#!, no watchin’ that!” Expect bloodshed if next idea is Chan-Li-Chen’s.

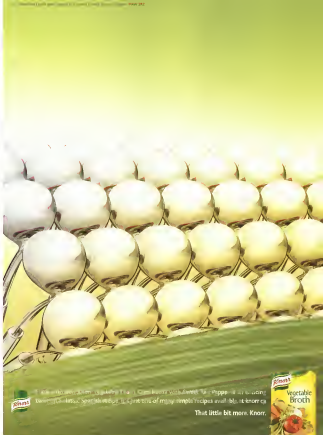


The royals | Charming, but are we still wild about Harry?

Harry snaps, wags the headline in Lorain's Evening Standard. And maybe he did. Certainly the image of the young prince caught in the camera's glare—face flushed, eyes glazed, recovered by bodyguards—had him looking more like your average soccer star than third in line to the throne. But back the camera up a few inches. This is a young man, after all, who has had actual work: a former art teacher accused him of cheating (he unshook him, so, secretly trying to tape-convert a confusion). And he is actually in a deer every time he goes out, by the paparazzi who hounded his mother, Diana, to death—literally—when he was a boy.

So did Harry forge a photographers-without-provision? Or, as he tells it, was he in the face by a camera and, pushing it away, got a photographer's leg? It almost doesn't matter. The British press has made up its mind about Harry. He is the family yobbo. Harry Portman, for being caught smoking grass (at 16). The purchasing prince in his teenage alter-ego brother Will, studying geography at university in Scotland, but Harry is only 16, a royal spokesman argued in his defence. He is not entitled to some privacy when he lives a night club life at 3 in the morning? A more pointed question: will not entitled to a little sex?

Quote of the week | 'I was asked to clean things up. We went through the files one by one.' **CHRISTIANE IPFESSIEL**, ex-wife to Alfonso DiGaudio, told the courtney inquiry she combed through banks of sponsorship documents to remove handwritten staff notes of the minister's directives.



WORLD

IRAQ In a redeployment fraught with both political and tactical overtones, Britain agreed to shift 850 troops and support personnel from relatively peaceful southern Iraq to the Baghdad area to help with the U.S.-led assault on insurgent-held Falluja and other hot spots in the so-called Surge triangle.

Meanwhile, reserve Sgt. Ben Frederick, the highest-ranking U.S. soldier charged in the abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib prison, was sentenced to eight years' confinement and a dishonorable discharge for dereliction of duty, assault and committing an indecent act. Frederick, 38, pleaded guilty and admitted flogging inmates to maintain order among other degradations. He is appealing the length of the sentence.

TYPHOON The deadliest Pacific storm in two decades, Typhoon Tokage, raged across southwestern Japan, killing 75 people and injuring hundreds more in cars, homes and coastal defenses were swept away in a sea of rain and gusting winds.

ANGLICANS Their reports were laid out for all to see as a sign from the Anglican Church's central body called on its U.S. affiliates to "embrace regret" for concealing an openly gay bishop, Gene Robinson, a year ago. Neither Robinson nor other leaders of the U.S. church agreed to turn back the clock. And Canadian Bishop Michael Ingham



TIGER CULL Workers cull the prize at a Thai zoo where 12 English tigers died from bird flu after being fed infected chicken parts. To avoid a terror outbreak, all others are being culled.

of Vancouver similarly refused to stop blessing same-sex marriages, which was called for in the report.

MSMR At least seven Muslim girls in France were expelled from school after refusing to remove their head scarves, so required

by a controversial new law to restrict the wearing of religious symbols. Three girls were also barred from class they had tried to replace their turbans with doh-ropes, but were told that was still not acceptable in a devoutly secular system.

NUCLEAR In a last-ditch attempt to avoid a showdown with the UN Security Council, Europe's big three—Britain, France and Germany—offered Iran financial and technological help in building a light water nuclear reactor if a shutdown program for an enriched system that can also be used to produce weapons-grade uranium. Alarmed at involvement in the case, the U.S. has threatened to take the nuclear issue to the Security Council to impose economic sanctions.

BUILDING A report from the European and Association of Human Rights Watch says institutionalized housing has become so rampant and vicious in the Democratic Republic of Congo that it is driving and driving many concepts are leaving the severe and ongoing physical and psychological trauma.

RANGED UP He's a tough old bird. Cuban President Fidel Castro, 75, fell off a stage after completing a graduation address and broke an arm and his knee. Rather than let them, he scrambled to his feet and made a joke.

HEALTH | SCIENCE

TRAFFIC People prone to heart attacks face triple their usual risk when in traffic, regardless of whether they are driving, in buses, or on bikes, German researchers said. Stress plays a role, but the biggest trigger seems to be air pollution.

SISTERS U.S. scientists are seeking 50,000 women—sisters of those who are suffering from breast cancer—to take part in a 10-year study of what promotes the disease, apart from genetic factors.

WAIT TIMES Canadians waited an average 8.4 weeks to see a specialist, after being delayed by their GP and a further 5.7 weeks until final (usually surgical) treatment, the Fraser Institute reported in its annual study. Up slightly from last year, the numbers would be lower if not for long waits of nine months or more for orthopaedic surgery.

SUPERBUG Faced with a superbug epidemic in Quebec, Health Canada is promoting the deadly hospital-based bacterium—*Clostridium difficile*—in 25 hospitals across the province. Believed to have been imported from the U.S., C. difficile, which causes severe diarrhea and fever, killed 109 people in 12 Quebec hospitals in the first six months of 2004, and infected 1,640 others, infectious disease specialist Dr. Vivian Loo reported.

CANADA

RAZOR BLADES A 10-year-old Iranian girl was not after picking up a bouquet of fake flowers, stabbed with razor blades that she found on the sidewalk near her school. It is the third such incident in northern Ontario in just over a month, beginning when someone buried blades of wood—with protruding blades—at a Toronto beach popular with volleyball players.



DISAPPEARED It's been weeks since Iranian forces arrested him but he killed a Canadian rebel, purported to be an explosives expert from Canada. But the Vancouver family of Rezaian Khalid Abolmohammadi, 25, said he was merely a store worker and part-time model, and neither they nor Foreign Affairs have been able to get confirmation from Moscow who exactly was killed. Another Canadian from Maple Ridge, B.C., was heading to a mutual friend's wedding in Acer, but never found it. Neither of them, nor the third person, who had also lived in Vancouver, has been heard from since. Reports from Vancouver said Abolmohammadi attended a mosque where the sister accompanied him to mosques and visits.

LARRY'S MOM The elderly mother of hockey great Larry McDonald was fined \$2,000 and given a 90-day suspension for a dangerous driving accident that killed a five-year-old boy near Calgary. The judge said jilting the 66-year-old Phyllis McDonald would not serve a purpose, but that stricter cautions are needed on elderly motorists. Her lawyer said she is giving up driving.



WHAT JINX? For the Rockies, it was another short of a miracle—the first win after the three strikes, the high-pitched third strike, the celebration and after being down three runs to none. But they still have to rid themselves of the Curse of the 50,000, from which they still look to the Yanks in 2005. For that, they will have to beat the St. Louis Cardinals to win their first World Series since 1925.

TRE CUTS Foreclosures, predicting that federal layoffs could top \$25 billion over the next six years had Finance Minister Ralph Gonsky stating about tax cuts to lower- and middle-income voters in his upcoming budget. The rocky picture came as the Bank of Canada raised its prime lending rate a quarter of a point and the dollar crossed the US90-cent barrier.

ANK FOOD Ontario is banning pop, pasta chips and junk food from elementary school vending machines. But it stopped short of outlawing pizza lunches and other carb-rich cafeteria fare. Meanwhile, the American Medical Association petitioned Chicago for fighting obesity by offering free bike lockers encourage students to cycle to school, and fitness workouts for children at food banks.



Mary Janigan | ON THE ISSUES



HOPE FOR TAXPAYERS

Reg Alcock is leading a revolution to transform how Ottawa delivers services

IT WAS THE SIGHT of himself, cody and brusque, on television in the summer that jolted Reg Alcock into seeing how his public civil servants viewed him. On paper, he was the perfect Treasury Board president: a Harvard master's graduate in public administration, veteran of the government operations committee and an engaging policy wonk who knows how systems work. But, cloaked with his bureaucracy, his gangly, scowly needed push to modernize government was evoking only fear and resentment. "I am not gratuitously friendly," he says with a rueful laugh. "I made mistakes in the early days. And I have got things to learn, too."

Then, in 2008, that behind-the-scenes critic began to change himself, provides a reason for taxpayer optimism. Because Alcock can master jargon for his subcommittee agenda, departments will expand how they share that jealously hoarded official commodity: information. So that overused word "efficiency" could actually prevail in government-wide information systems. Tiny Aboriginal bands, for one, would not be churning out dozens of annual reports for funding agencies. Alcock's own career to know how many years Ottawa's own would not be over with blank official letters.

Ministerial efforts to good citizens were thwarted, still, while deputy ministers begged the PM to change their spending habits after the last election. But the 56-year-old Alcock has Paul Martin's support. (According to the burly Winnipeg, MB, "He has been very solidly there.") And Alcock is doing what must be done: "If you change the way info-

mation is held in the public sector, you produce change within the organization that are much greater than I thought," he says. "Tons of change is based on the unknown. So you have to engage—and talk, talk, talk."

The new Alcock officially debates with the tabling of three reports over the next two months: proposals to bring modern government to market Crown corporations, to deter all bureaucratic mismanagement and to revise the early 19th-century doctrine of ministerial responsibility while ensuring someone is responsible. But that's only the start. Alcock wants more research resources so MPs can make sense of spending plans and catch budgetary holes before they happen. But slogging through those estimates is tough. "A lot of my colleagues think I'm kind of goofy because I am deeply interested in public management," he says.

There are huge problems ahead. Saddled with a minority government, the Martin PMO has unsettled businesses with its their disorganization and indecisive signals. Both sides are suspicious and almost paranoid. Then there is the apparent contradiction: how do we speed up the implementation of programs without sloppy spending? And, perhaps most importantly, how do we find the planned \$12 billion in spending cuts over the next few years—which is bound to be a brutal exercise—and still tell the same how government systems work?

Alcock's answer: lay everyone into the process of solving the problems. If officials are confident that MPs really understand a program, they won't need to micromanage. Close advisers raise another possibility: if deputy ministers balk at change, they should be replaced by outsiders with private-sector expertise. So there are dreams ahead. But if taxpayers are lucky, the Martin government's fiscal deed may be to fix it. **E**

Mary Janigan is a political and policy writer. mary.janigan@maclean.ca

Passages

WOM Toronto photographer Edward Burtynsky, 49, known for his startling imagery of environmental destruction (which has been featured in *Maclean's*), won the inaugural TED Prize from



a U.S. foundation promoting new ideas in science, management and design. Co-winners included U.S. biomedical engineer Robert Finkel and Irish actor Bono. Each receives US\$200,000 to fulfill three wishes.

GRID New Scots hero boxer Bruce Palmer, who along with Neil Young founded Buffalo Springfield, one of the seminal rock groups of the 1960s, died earlier last month at 52 of a heart attack in Belleville, Ont.

GRID Doug Bennett, for 27 years the hard-driving, hard-nosed front man of Vancouver-based touring band Dog and the Spleen, succumbed to an undisclosed but long-standing condition. He was 52.



DUMPED Following 16 years as player, coach and inspiration to the Canadian men's basketball team, Jay "Shrimp" van Lier, after the unimpaired not-quite-for-the-last Olympics Torino, 46, accepted his day job as an assistant coach with the NBA Toronto Raptors.

GRID One of the early devotees of Garçonnet, Pierre Salinger rose from reporter (twice) to become president John F. Kennedy's press secretary and confidant, a role he can discuss with the president's widow, Jackie. He later returned to journalism, working for ABC News in Europe. Salinger, 79, died in France of heart failure.

GRID Blended with one of the most soothing voices in Canadian broadcasting, CBC reporter Robin Earle explored Ottawa and European politics to the country for 30 years. He passed away at his Ottawa home, at 77, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

THE MACLEAN'S INTERVIEW



Memoirs | SHEILA COPPS

'THUGS' IN THE GOVERNMENT

SHEILA COPPS COWETS RESPECT, but she has always been better at courtship controversy. Her new memoir, *World's Toughest Job*, chronicles her years as a federal cabinet minister under Jean Chrétien while pleading for attention to her work on the environment and autism. But the book, inevitably, is all about Copps's ill-fated rise on her better half with Paul Martin. While a ghost-written book had been planned for some time, the chance to write it herself after Martin's forces pushed her out of politics by defeating her for the next election in a Hamilton riding last March. True to her reputation, she doesn't mince words.

You claim in the book that the Martin camp played dirty to get that nomination for your guy, Roy Valeri. What's your proof?

Hundreds of people were turned away from voting at the nomination meeting. I have a tape of Liberal officials leading Roy Valeri's people in through the back door to vote.

How many media would put up with that sort of thing if it happened on at least 30 ridings?

But politics has always had its rough side. There may be thugs everywhere, but usually they are not running the government.

You're calling the Prime Minister's new thug? Totally.

What was it like writing this book so soon after being forced out of politics? It turned out to be very therapeutic. Going through something like that nomination process, there is a lot of pain involved. Writing the book helps organize your thoughts, helps heal you, is a way.

You argue in it that women in politics still face an uphill struggle. Has that changed over the years?

I think in the 1980s and early 1990s there was an attempt to fight systemic discrimination against women in politics, and then we just sort of all assumed the fight was over, and gave up. I was a whiffo for women at the Liberal party. We had a strategy and a target; we had to go out and find 25 per cent women candidates. But in the last election, women's issues weren't even mentioned in the debates by any of the leaders—none of them! I see the CBC has in 99 Greatest Canadians [poll] and there's only a woman among them.

You seem frustrated that your policy ideas have received less media attention than your combative persona.

So much of what we do is defined by the 15-second clip. There isn't a lot of time given to thoughtful articles any more. You need to be able to get detailed stories in the daily newspapers. Now it's become a kind of collection of rumours.

Of the political giants you write about, Pierre Trudeau and Bill Clinton among them, who impressed you the most?

They're all very different, obviously, but Nelson Mandela was the most amazing. You see people in religious printings that they have a halo. He has no halo. He literally forgave everyone. He has no monster. He is so at peace.

You've been acting in the play *Steel Magnolias* in Kingston, Ont. That's quite a change of pace. What's that been like? I'm having a ball! Unlike politics, in a play, if you fail, everybody else fails. In politics, it's the coast opposite. If you fail, there are a lot of people kind of to take advantage of it. **JAN 2008**



Cover | BY JONATHAN GATEHOUSE

THE WAR NEXT DOOR

The U.S. race is tight, vicious—and vital to the rest of the world. Welcome to Ohio, where the battle will be won or lost

HERE'S SOME GOOD NEWS for George W. Bush. On the whole, the people of Mississippi appear to be committed to the peaceful resolution of the issues that are tearing their country apart.

Of course, it would be even more welcome if we were talking about the Sunnis and Shi'as of Iraq, rather than the 3,000, largely Amish, residents of a quaintly named farming township in northeastern Ohio. But given the volatility and general skepticism of American public opinion in the run-up to the Nov. 2 election, one suspects the Republican President—and his Democratic challenger John Kerry—are talking comfort wherever they can find it.

With only days remaining in what has been the costliest—and arguably bitterest—campaign in U.S. history, the outcome remains impossible to predict, as momentum shifts with each new poll. There are growing fears that 2000's Florida balloting fiasco will be replicated in at least a half dozen other battleground states like Ohio, Iowa, Oregon and Pennsylvania as the parties scrap for every electoral college vote. Accusations of fraud and intimidation are already being leveled, with sides preparing armies of lawyers for polling day, and the political battles beyond. And all the relentless negativity seems to be taking its toll on the voters, with most now harboring "unfavorable" views of both candidates, and strong doubts about their sunny prospects of a better tomorrow.

Outside his home near the crossroads of this easy-bake but no-slip-sht town, Richard Miller admits his decision hasn't been easy. "I'm a Republican, but this time I've got to go with the Democrats." It's not so much that the 58-year-old lives in Ohio (he lost 2000) as that the past four years—many of them well-paid blue-collar manufacturing positions—and the U.S. economy continues to unravel. His brother-in-law in Michigan just saw his employer relocate to Mexico, and Miller fears his own job at a local rubber factory may also be destined for cheaper climes.

Then there's Iraq. His future son-in-law, a member of the National Guard, is being deployed soon after the election. As a Vietnam vet, Miller remembers all too well what it was like so right a war that much of the country didn't

A campaigning weary, Miller leans on the fence with neither candidate. And there's light.



Along with the tea, too, Bush has been hurt by the sluggish economy, particularly in Ohio. But supporters still see him as a strong leader.

believe in. And he's skeptical about why America's pursuit of Osama bin Laden has taken a detour through Baghdad. "Bush isn't worried about the little guy," he says. "He's worried about oil."

Down the road, Linda Warner has come to the opposite conclusion. Stranding her-foot on the threshold of her trailer, the 48-year-old mother of three says she's thrilled about what's happening in the war, but gives the President full marks for the fight against terror. And if the economy isn't great, she says, it has more to do with 9/11 than anything Bush has or hasn't done. But when reality comes for Warner, and many of her neighbors in this deeply religious community, is knowing that the man in the Oval Office shares their beliefs. "I like his morals, the way he's trying to keep family values, and his respect on capital punishment."

Ohio's oddball. Conventional wisdom says the candidate who was one of the three biggest barfly grounds takes the Oval Office. Bush is ahead in Florida, Kerry has the edge

in Pennsylvania, but in Ohio the lead changes hands almost daily. No Republican has ever won the White House without the Buckeye State. Officials are being bombarded with political advertising, hawked by the janes it's becoming uncomfortable. People are reacting carefully with their neighbors.

"SMART is never number one with us," says Noonan. "Americans look at the President and think, 'He can hire smart.'"

The free-wheeling political discussions that used to take place down at the local coffee shop and post office aren't happening anymore. More laws stop Halloween decorations than election signs. Trained in a growing conflict abroad, and deeply confused at home, people in Ohio and across America wonder what it will take to make

democratic elected ages. And ask how, after the disaster the country has traveled in the last four years, they find themselves right back where they started.

IN POLITICS, especially American politics, you don't have theories that bring ya. Which is probably why Republicans in Columbus have unanimously chosen to hold their open-to-the-public, debate watching party in the clubhouse of a grand country in a wealthy suburb. (Local Democrats, also unfathomably true to stereotype, are simultaneously gathering at a steelworkers' union hall.) The parking lot is filled with SUVs and luxury sedans. Inside, the crowd is a mix of well-heeled politicos and business people, sprinkled with a few earnest and plainly out-of-suits. There are two numbers of visible emotions in pursuit. One is a cautious respect for the local NBC affiliate.

In 2000, George W. Bush promised "compassionate conservatism," but four years later, these partisans are no longer in the

LIVING UP HERE, BUT THINKING ABOUT HOME

MORE THAN 600,000 AMERICANS and thousands more dual American-Canadian citizens live north of the border. Many will vote here already—last ballots in the U.S. election.

"I grew up in a place where you'd get ingrained into our psyche that the United States is the best place to live. After moving to Canada, I like you with that. I know now that you can be a very full person in Canada, whereas growing up in the U.S. you don't think you can leave that. Since that's been here, we moved to make more liberal viewpoints."

—Debra Winkler, 36, Hubbard, U.S. American-Canadian citizen. Voting state: Alaska. Voting for Kerry.

"Living in Canada has intensified and confirmed my sense of connection to the States. I find it difficult to be an American here. It's a free, democratic country like Canada, people discover that for an American or a Republican and I get this look of not understanding: 'How could anyone possibly think like that?'"

—Chris Marlow, 40, Kingston, Ont., American citizen. Voting state: New York. Voting for Bush.

ing a Bush/Clinton pin, there would be much more negative up here."

—Kathryn Broyles, 41, Whitehouse, N.H.T., American citizen. Voting state: Texas. Voting for Kerry.

"U.S. politics is not just domestic, it's international. Not just Americans in Canada are interested in this election. Canadians are watching because most realize how important the U.S. is to Canada. We like to criticize the Americans, but everybody has different views. In fact, we're very similar."

—Chris Dault, 42, Toronto, American-born citizen. Voting state: Maryland. Voting for Bush.

"It's not a good thing at all that the war on terror has become the number one issue. The Canadian perspective is more socially focused and left of the U.S., and it's sure that things like money, health care, education, same-sex marriage and alcohol are issues that need to be discussed in this election."

—Rob Evans, 33, Toronto, American-Canadian citizen. Voting state: California.

"Everybody wants to occupy the middle ground, but the middle is very different to the two countries. U.S. politics starts on the right of the Conservative Party of Canada."

—Gerald Gibson, 46, Calgary, American citizen. Voting state: California. Voting for Bush. *CONTRIBUTOR CHRIS DAVITT*

most to give quarter. They live and breathe every time John Kerry appears on the TV "More World BS" one min shows at the Metroland's parent's claim that Republican us can have reminded the rich. When Bush lands a well-timed snigger—"A plan is not a theory of complexity"—the room explodes in cheering and applause that would give a Jerry Springer audience to shiver.

The thrust and pry is all good fun, but for many in the crowd the real sensation of the evening is the chance to meet real, live West Wing celebrity Peggy Noonan with a

special invitation to Ronald Reagan, and chief speechwriter for George Bush, the elder New Yorker. For her, she's written five bestselling political books, and profited handsomely from her association with what many Republicans view as: Golden Age Noonan, wearing a large W-O-B brooch on her elegantly tailored suit, a predicting some thing beyond the expectations of Bush's less fervent supporters—a blowout victory. The neck and neck polls just aren't a true reflection of where the American public stands, she argues. The revolution isn't over

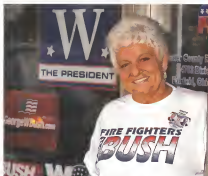
"This is not a 30/70 country," she says. "I am more and more convinced that this is a conservative country, in some very profound ways." The Democrats, in her view, are out of touch with the heartland as much as about race, gay marriage and the war on terror.

Bush's popularity has been battered by the Iraq war and the sluggish economy, but in the end, that's not what Americans will cast their ballots on, argues Noonan. They vote for the man they think will act decisively to keep them safe. And the polls that consistently suggest voters see Kerry as the more intelligent candidate? "He's smart, but smart is never number one with us. It just isn't," says Noonan. "Americans look at the President and think, 'He can hire smart.'"

It may be misleading to foreigners, but life experience, gutters and general world knowledge are far down the checklist of many U.S. voters. As a combined political leader, chief warrior and moral father figure, the idealized occupant of the White House embodies a host of particularly American values—hardiness, home sense, patriotism. "For Congress, people vote on local issues, but the presidency is different kind of institution," says Ryan Bartleson, chairman of the political science department at Ohio's Miami University. "People put extra weight on these intangible qualities we call feeling presidential. It's the way I would like you, speak and present himself."

In Republican eyes, this is Bush's crucial advantage. For four years, through the worst economic shock in American history and the Iraq war, he's held the talk, and walked the walk. When most of those of the world seem as disoriented swimmers, it's only as a desirable toughness. The vast opportunity of this President abroad, and increasingly at home—his approval numbers now hover around 70 per cent, a threshold below which incumbents are rarely re-elected—is seen by a badge of honor, proof that he leads by conviction, not polls.

That's the profound belief that has Joanne Keizer volunteering on days a week as the Bush/Cheney campaign in suburban Cincinnati. A 60-year-old retired firefighter with more than a passing resemblance to Barbara Bush (the President himself remarked on it when she met him at a rally), she trades hundreds of phone calls a night on W's behalf. "It's his risk to us," she says, explaining the appeal. "It's the first President we've had in a long time willing to do



something like going." In the past, Steiner has stayed from the Republican fold—she voted for Clinton in '92—and, being pro-choice and in favor of stem-cell research, she's not entirely on board with the party platform. But 9/11 will reverberate. "For me, what's at stake is the survival, not just of this country, but the entire world," she says. "I don't think [John] Kerry has any concept of what it takes. I've never been so afraid of another human being in all my life."

Republicans aren't shy about exploring such concerns. In a campaign visit to Ohio last week, Dick Cheney railed the specter of terrorists making nuclear, chemical or biological weapons into American cities, and suggested Kerry wouldn't be "tough and aggressive" enough to combat such a threat.

Steiner says of Kerry: "We never become a threat of another human being in all my life."

Bush's backers aren't reticent either. The National Rifle Association has put up billboards in swing states featuring a Finnish poodle wearing a Kerry for President sweater. "Thursday don't hurt," reads the caption. "The party's chosen wedgie issue—gay marriage—is on the ballot in Ohio in the form of a proposed amendment to the state constitution banning same-sex unions. Phil Barresi, chairman of the Ohio Campaign to Protect Marriage, says his group will distribute 2.5 million leaflets to churches before Election Day, and contact every home in the state to urge people to vote. While the group is officially politically neu-

tral, Barresi makes no secret of which side Mickey he and like-minded fundamentalist Christians support. "In America, we have a ready-made that might vote for someone because of their hatred," he says. "But this is the most important election in my lifetime. We've never had a bigger spread between the parties. And the fact that John Kerry might get elected scares me to death."

IT'S A PLACE that has known better days. The once tightly clustered houses in this downtown Cleveland neighborhood are slowly crumbling; many are boarded up. Car hulks sit rotting in front yards. Men push shopping carts filled with scavenged bits of metal, on their way to make a deal on the local street. But if America is as deeply divided

as polls suggest, Cleveland—which has the dubious honor of being the country's poorest big city—is where the race for the presidency may find its finish line. In 2000, Bush beat Gore by 165,000 votes in Ohio, a loss that Democrats are keen to avenge. This time, aggressive voter registration drives have added 700,000 people to the state rolls, many of them African American.

Sitting in his wood-paneled study at the Apostles Baptist Church, Rev. Marvin McMillen preaches his fingertips together and ponders why one by League-educated pastor's privileged family is preferable to the other. "I think, as with many other people, I start from a negative—he's not George Bush," John Kerry says, not having the answer to the problems plaguing America's inner cities, says the pastor, but at least they're on his radar screen. "I don't think we're even as afterthought for the President." According to the most recent census data, 46 percent of children in Cleveland live below the poverty line. The spending per student in inner-city schools is less than half that of Cleveland's wealthy suburbs. And thousands of families count themselves among the 45 million Americans with no health insurance.

Yet these issues have rarely been aired in a campaign dominated by talk of foreign wars—past and present—and tax cuts at

home. "The notion of foregoing anything personal for the sake of the national good, or making whole those who have been hurt by the system, I don't think is even on the table," says McMillen. "But Kerry and John Edwards seem willing to push the nation in that direction. And this community will vote in numbers with that hope."

Wherever their misgivings, Kerry, leaving voters here will find it hard to ignore the call to arms in the campaign's warning days. Lefty public interest groups, unions, even corners of celebrity—Hilary Swank, Martin Short, the widely discussed Kevin Spacey, Michael Caine and Mandy Patinkin—from the Ohio-set TV show *Knave's Tale*—have been on the trail reminding people of their duty despite the barnstorm George Soros, perhaps the last anti-Bush billionaire, has given almost US\$24 million to Democratic-friendly groups. The International Association of Fire Fighters has its Ohio members knocking on doors to beat the Republican. As a whole stop rally in Columbus, Harold Schwabeger, the union president, talks about why so many of his members have turned against Bush. "We're sick of a President who is all on the rhetoric of

McMillen says of Bush: "I don't think we're even an afterthought for the President."

supporting our first responders, but fails to start when it comes to providing the resources," he says. Coming from a profession that's widely respected and admired—the heroes of 9/11—such expressions of his appointments may well resonate with voters.

Some interventions are more welcome than others, however. A campaign by Britain's *Guardian* newspaper encouraging readers to enroll readers of *Clark County*, near Dayton, explaining why the U.S. devotion matters to them, met a predictable response. "Real Americans aren't interested in your panky-ass, tea-sipping opinions," reads one of the poster replies. "If you want to save the world, begin with your own worst/least interest off." The overwhelmed paper stopped the protest.

'REAL Americans,' said one reply to a nosy Brit, 'aren't interested in your panky-ass, tea-sipping opinions'

The Democrats will mount an unprecedented promotion of fear, mobilizing more than 700,000 volunteers to canvass door-to-door. A successful legal challenge of some dodgy signatures on nonvoter

mailing papers has moved Ralph Nader from Ohio ballot, leaving the anti-Bush forces no other option. "The Republicans know that if all of our supporters come out, they will lose, and lose badly," boasts Friends of Cliff, the Kerry campaign's Ohio spokesman.

Still, in an election shaping up as a referendum on Bush's leadership, rather than a vote on Kerry's contrasting views, nothing is certain. As the country's religious—left, right, or liberal, whether we continue to waver, political peace or chaos could prove even harder to find. Even in the small-town heartland, there are now two Americas. A couple of blocks from the party-bible buildings of Wilmington College, Mark Donowski stands in line outside a soup kitchen. The 56-year-old has been out of work for three years, since he lost the job he held for 28 years at a local plastic factory. "We need to get Bush out of there—they done enough damage," he says. Donowski will be voting. He'd like to get the message out to his friends and family, but he's had. In economy that's spent \$120 billion on Iraq, he can't afford a phone.

JOHN H. JOHNSON/CLARK COUNTY, OHIO

WHAT THE NEIGHBORS THINK

Which candidate would you vote for?

John Kerry	56%
George W. Bush	38%

Who would have the best relationship with Canada?

Kerry	62%
Bush	34%

How has your opinion of the U.S. changed over the past four years?

Improved	32%
Worsened	68%

If it got worse, why?

Actions of Bush and his administration	76%
Attitudes of the American people	32%

A new Rogers Media poll shows that Canadians have a clear presidential choice.

Depending on who is elected, what will the world be like in four years?

More dangerous with Bush	62%
More dangerous with Kerry	34%

SOURCE: ROGERS MEDIA, SURVEYED 1,000 CANADIANS IN OCTOBER 2001.

FROM BOTH SIDES NOW

The race for president inevitably becomes a referendum on the incumbent, and George W. Bush has proved to be one of the most divisive U.S. leaders in decades. McCain's asked two questions—one liberal, one conservative—from small Middle American towns, for their takes on Bush and his challenger, John Kerry.

Just Flunk, Republican-turned-Democrat, former editor and publisher of the *Waco County Journal of Atchafalaya, Mo., now an columnist.*

OPINION HIS PERFORMANCE In the debates, not to mention his record in the White House, logic says George W. Bush's goose ought to be cooked. But a hefty portion of American voters support the President, even defend him. A Republican friend told me she thinks it's shameful the way the news media make fun of Bush because he talks funny. "I don't talk so well myself," she said. "Thank God they don't mean I'm not smart!"

What keeps the Bush brandwagon rolling? Never mind that he's a rich man and a rich man's son (like his father, "Boss with a voice from his mouth"), as former Texas governor Ann Richards said of George the Elder: Many voters find comfort in greed with this president. He thinks in black and white. He shows up in jeans and cowboy boots. He has the John Wayne swagger down pat. He used to drink a lot. He's one of us.

Thank you John Kerry, forward and dead. As a senator he was a fiscal hawk who fought "borrow and spend" Republicanism. He was a fair shot for American workers losing jobs to Third World nations, reasonable regulation or corporate controls, no breaks for the middle class. He wants to stop the growth of a permanent underclass in the richest nation on earth. With his background experience in Vietnam, he beats Bush as commander in chief. He stands this country as a force for good in the world, not as the new Rome imposing its will by force of arms.

Still, it's hard to sell Kerry in the small towns in mid-Missouri where I live. Republicans here fall into four groups. All farmers, anybody making more than \$100,000 a year, the Christian Right, and the good ol'

boys who want their women subservient, their steak sliced thin and fried hard, the flag draped on the radiator of the pickup and their guns handy. Democrats are what's left over—teachers, librarians, college professors, a handful of columnists.

Talk about Kerry at the coffee shop downtown and the locals will bet you he reads big books, talks foreign languages, drinks red wine, eats snails and goes to a disco at set shows and concerts with a clutch of queer partners and nubile players. *Anonymous* huh? No, they buy diesel. *Anonymous* huh? It's my guess Missouri will go Republican.

Democrats defend our Missourians when people turned to government to protect them from corporate malfeasance. Today, rural Americans put their trust in corporations they see as bastions of free enterprise and keepers of the American Way. Forget *Satan*. At least the corporate world isn't socialist. They're not so sure about government. Or government taxes. Bush scores with voters who run blue at the thought of the IRS. He doesn't regret that in four years he turned a hefty budget deficit into the largest deficit in history. He cut taxes for the wealthy and agreed the realists of Americans who can't find jobs or afford basic health care. And what of his cozy no-war with us in Iraq and the rubber-chicken we're using to pay for it?

Historians was frantic over American imperialism under the Bush regime, yet on the same podium, "Gee, we sent our boys to Iraq to kill Saddam, to die for them. You'd think they'd be grateful." See, the war isn't Bush's fault. The Iraqis just don't get it. In fact, polls show Americans trust Bush to fight terrorism more than they do Kerry. Four years of failure still don't register, and another unending Republican optimism nor the Democrats' call for globalism.



For sure, Bush's goose ought to be cooked, others see Kerry as a lame-duck liberal

offer a solution, away to slash the U.S. army, heads high, out of Iraq.

In the mid-1970s, I could still call myself liberal Republican. When the GOP began its move to the right, moderates were told to go along or get out. I got out. William Jefferson Clinton, hardly classic Democrat, was born on Bill Clinton's watch. Yet at the polls, partisan politics has never been stronger—and, whenever this election, the aftermath won't be pretty. If it's

Reagan, Bush may not be the most intellectual president we've ever had, but he's surrounded himself with some of the brightest minds around, and he's looking to his guns. Vietnam-era defense secretary Robert McNamara learned the hard way that no war can be managed. Winning takes leadership. Bush has shown that in the face of criticism from Kerry, a majority of the United Nations, and a minority of our NATO allies, including Canada.

On domestic policy, Bush has been a consensus-builder, co-opting ideas from others, even of different ideologies. He signed into law campaign finance reform legislation and the No Child Left Behind Act, which was co-authored by left-wing Senator Ted Kennedy. He has lifted foreign-policy issues and flexible time to make workplace more family friendly and pushed his health-care plan to cure his socialist side. This is compromise conservatism.

By comparison, Senator Kerry is a lame-duck liberal whose stump speeches are short on substance, but his record. Dispute two decades in the Senate, Kerry has very little to show in terms of legislative accomplishments. Rather, he has voted against anti-terror weapons systems, even against body armor—just part of his left-wing record. Hillary Clinton's push for universal medicine died 11 years ago, but Kerry is still calling for it. In Iraq, he doesn't seem to understand that an ounce of prevention—pre-emption by offensive warfare—is worth more than a pound of cure.

Former secretary of state Henry Kissinger embodied the "pragmatic chaos" of Republican foreign policy, which placed a priority on doing what's best for U.S. national self-interest. This means toleration of authoritarian regimes. The late president Ronald Reagan embodied the "human rights faction" of GOP policy, which meant trying to bring down Communism by forcing into certain countries into a massive military buildup. Some called this impractical, but it worked. What's unique about the Bush II

administration is that it merged the Kissinger and Reagan factions. Invading Iraq was our national self-interest, as well as that of our sometimes ungrateful European "friends," whose oil supply we are protecting, and our Middle Eastern allies, who fear Saddam Hussein. It was also for the cause of human rights that we invaded Iraq, to prevent further atrocities.

Yes, the war in difficult. But in Dubai, where I traveled recently on business, a newspaper article reminded me of the fact that Saddam emptied his prisons before the U.S. invaded. Much of the so-called political insurgency is nothing more than common criminals on the loose, serving old scores. [I've also learned that even educated Arabs blame Bush for all the problems of the region, never mind the World Trade Center attacks.] Too often we forget that pacifying a defeated country takes time, as it did in Japan and Germany after the Second World War.

President Bush did not knowingly let loose weapons of mass destruction. He was misled. In addition to gaining his own people, among the few "successes" of Saddam's weapons program was enough bluff to fool even the CIA. We became too reliant on electronic intelligence at the expense of human intelligence, which has never been replaced and which is now being hoarded up.

Even without the WMD pretense, our invasion of Iraq was unjustified, it can help bring democracy to the Middle East. It took the U.S. to lose two casualties to finally enforce the UN's ceasefire after eight Iraqis in 1991 and again in 2003. Indeed, we should have finished the job by removing Saddam in the first Gulf War. Every year history repeats itself, the price goes up.

Lowell, like Bush, persists in the face of criticism. Nation-building also takes leadership, not merely management. The facts, since Sept. 11, 2001, 38 million people have been liberated from dictatorship, thanks to the President. Let's extend the freedoms of freedom further.

Kerry, he'll have the light of his life with a cabal of well-funded neo-cons with a strong sense of entitlement. If it's Bush, he'll endure the endless bickering of his friends and true Democratic party. It could be the Greatest Show on Earth. Get your tickets early.

Nate LaMotte, West Point grad, international sales manager for a U.S. manufacturer, contributor to the *Palladium* from of Richmond, Ind.

GEORGE W. BUSH is a straight shooter. He hasn't fallen victim to 20 years of Senate speak, as has John Kerry. Like Ronald



WHO'S BEST FOR CANADA?

In the free trade vs. protectionism debate, the choice is as clear as mud, reports STEVE MAICH

IN THE LAST CENTURY, most mainstream politicians knew increased trade offered something for everyone. It's not like everybody was in favour of free-flowing commerce back then, but at least you could sell the free traders from the protectionists, which made it a relatively easy sport to figure out the implications of U.S. elections for Canada. You could count on the Democrats' cozy partnership with this country on social and environmental issues, and you could count on the Republicans to co-operate on economic ones.

Alas, those were the simple days of the 1980s, and although the century ended only four

years ago, it seems like a distant memory. While most of the world's attention has been focused for months on U.S. foreign policy, Canadians ought to be just as concerned with questions closer to home. Namely, which candidate—President George W. Bush or Senator John Kerry—is best suited to repair the fraying edges of the world's biggest trading partnership? Unfortunately, the rhetoric of the election campaign provides

few clues to the answer. In the new, upside-down world of American politics, even as both candidates claim to be free-market capitalists when it suits them, they cloak themselves in protectionism if there's a vice to be had in it. The lesson? Nobody ever lost an election by blaming the country's economic problems on foreigners and promising to protect American jobs.

But while much has been written about the

From cattle to softwood lumber to garbage, these are big cross-border issues at stake

deepening divide within the United States, the greatest chasm of all may lie between what the candidates say about trade and what they actually do.

During his last campaign for the presidency back in 1999, Bush said he would fight to expand free trade. "The fearful build walls. The confident demolish them," he said. Well, if the Republican nominee was confident back then, the doppelgänger who took over the White House in 2001 spent most of his first year looking very fearful indeed. The most obvious example of Bush's protectionist bulging at the ongoing deadlock over Canada's softwood lumber exports. Since 2001, the U.S. has imposed a crushing levy on Canadian shippers to punish the country's rules concerning logging on government land. The World Trade Organization ruled in Canada's favour last May, and yet the tariff wall still stands, with U.S. trade officials threatening to drag the process out for years to come.

Last year, the U.S. launched yet another challenge against Canada's wheat marketing system, only to see the WTO rule again in Canada's favour. Still, the issue remains unresolved because nothing shores up support in Bush-loving rural states quite like an attack on foreign agricultural imports. And it's not just Canada that has been the target of such politically motivated tariffs. In 2002, the U.S. slapped foreign steel imports from many countries with up to 30-per-cent tariffs in a crass attempt to win support as the key swing states of the run belt. After 20 months, the Bush administration lifted the steel duty to avert a trade war after the WTO ruled against the U.S. yet again.

And let's not forget Washington's campaign based on importing Alberta beef, which arose from a single case of mad cow disease discovered in May 2003. Almost a year and a half has passed and not a single new case has emerged, yet the border remains closed with no indication of when it might reopen. But more than any other issue, the mad cow disease disaster is why many Canadians see little to choose between Kerry and Bush on economic issues. Kerry was one of 10 Democrats who signed a letter last April, urging the government to leave the beef in place.

Most Canadians seem to like Kerry's more dovish military stance and his promise of



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THE GREAT DRUG DEBATE

Canadian meds have become a political hot potato in the States. Who says they're unsafe?

AS WITH ALL GOOD ADS, there is no con-fusing the message. "Recently the FDA ordered three medicines from 'Canada,'" reads the large type at the top. "When they arrived one thing was clear: They weren't from Canada." And for by pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline, the ad takes a clever shot at Canadian online pharmacies. It's been running since the summer in U.S. newspapers and magazines and is based on what happened when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration implied to Spain from a website offering prescription savings from north of the border. The drugs arrived postmarked Dallas, with a return address in Miami. The company involved at first told the U.S. Food and Drug Administration it was based in the U.S., then later, *Belle*. The website turned out to be a con in China, and the credit card payment went to St. Kitts in the West Indies. "Where did all these medicines really come from? And what exactly is it, then?" the ad asks comically. "Getting medicines from 'Canada' isn't the answer. It is time to rise a few questions."

There's also the strange of the big pharmaceutical companies, the FDA and the Bush administration. Question the safety of importing Canadian prescription drugs, and question it often—and protect a U.S. market worth a whopping US\$200 billion a year, even from their own increasingly uneat citizens.

In 2004, Canadian online exporters are expected to take a US\$1.2-billion slice of that market. And while that's less than one per cent, cheaper Canadian medicines have



Seniors in New York display their haul after a shopping spree in Toronto

turned into a giant headache for manufacturers, and a political hot potato in the U.S. presidential campaign. President George W. Bush says ordering drugs online is dangerous. Canadian drugs aren't FDA-approved, as they could be unsafe, goes the refrain. But Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry wants drug imports to actually increase, and he has Bush waffling and Canadians worried about their own supply.

Paradoxically, drugs sold in Canada and the U.S. generally come from the same companies and their quality-controlled plants around the globe. Same drugs, only cheaper, as ordinary Americans, fed up with paying the highest drug prices in the world, have been hopping buses and trains to head north on organized shopping excursions, returning with 90-day supplies. While it's illegal under U.S. law for patients to import medicine, the FDA has routinely turned a blind eye to the road trips. From there it

was just a hop, skip and click of the mouse to online sales.

But are they safe? In August, Lester Crawford, the FDA's acting commissioner, went so far as to reach the spectre of drug-tampering sensors trying to harm Americans through Internet sales. William Hubbard, the FDA's associate commissioner for policy and planning, says drugs from Canada "are not approved and therefore illegal, and more importantly, they could be unsafe." Don Sasection, director of corporate affairs at Pfizer Canada Inc. in Montreal, also plays

the safety card. "It's an open invitation," says Sasection. "For counterfeit or adulterated products that could come from anywhere."

Sasection does have a point—counterfeit Viagra and Lipitor, the cholesterol drug, have popped up all over the world. But when it comes to legitimate Canadian drugs shipped to the U.S., the problem is not safety but greed, says Dr. Peter Reier, a vice president at Pfizer's head office in New Jersey. In September, Reier broke ranks with Pfizer, the world's largest drug producer. Speaking, he said, as an ordinary citizen, he pointed out that European countries have sold pharmaceuticals among themselves safely for decades and there should be nothing to stop two sophisticated neighbors like Canada and the U.S. from doing the same. Searching the flow of cheaper brand-name drugs from Canada—where they can cost up to 90 per cent less than in the U.S. because of fabled

regulations here and the weak or Canadian currency—is good only for short-term profits, argues Reier.

Long term, he says, the costs risk shoring millions of customers. "It's like peeing in your pants," says Reier. "It's warm and nice for a while, but then it gets real cold."

The last thing U.S. drug makers want are pressure on by the government, as in Canada. Hence a concerted effort to discredit the Canadian industry, argues David MacLay, executive director of the Canadian International Pharmacy Association (CIPA), which represents about 35 of the country's roughly 130 mail-order operations (the biggest are owned in Winnipeg, Vancouver and Calgary). The GlaxoSmithKline ad, says MacLay, can Canadian exporters and overlooks the industry's safety standards and clean record. "The line is not checked," says MacLay. "Belle wasn't a prostitute in Canada."

The manufacturers argue high prices fund the research and development for new drugs or, as the GlaxoSmithKline ad declares, "Today's medicines finance tomorrow's miracles." That may be so. But it's also true that drug companies spend more on marketing than on R & D, and the majority of new drugs aren't really new but "me-too" knock-offs—similar to ones that are already popular.

Recently, Bush started asking himself fast ones about allowing drug imports from Canada. During his second debate with Kerry, he said he hadn't ruled out the possibility. But it's worth noting that, during the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush and his running mate seemed a good idea. Since then, his government has opposed imports with every administrative fibre in its body. Last year, the House of Representatives voted in favour of imports from Canada and Europe, but Republican majority leader Bill Frist scuttled the initiative in the Senate.

Another odd thing about this drug fight is that the White House's resistance comes in at least two dozen states and a handful of large ones are looking at federal ways to import Canadian medicines, to reduce the cost of their drug benefit programs. Five already have laws in place to facilitate imports. Kerry, meanwhile, is making political hay out of Bush's sudden willingness to import his vaccine from Canada to compensate for a widespread shortage in the States. "That sure sounds strange coming from a president who banned importing safe drugs from Canada," says Kerry, who now cites his television ad reflecting Bush's over-the-top flip-flop on vaccines.

If elected, Kerry is promising to direct the FDA to certify the safety of Canadian pharmaceuticals. He would then allow individuals, pharmacists or wholesalers to import whatever is available. Last week, however, a coalition representing 14 organizations in Canada—including the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association, the Arthritis Society and

ONLINE sales to the States by Canada's internet pharmacies are expected to reach US\$1.2 billion a year

CARP, a lobby group for those over 55, called for a halt to exports, fearing shortages and price hikes in Canada. Federal Health Minister Ujjal Desai responded by saying the Canadian drug supply is secure.

At the same time, however, Health Canada has been mulling CDPA's case. Federal officials, says Mackay, hint threatened to close down the exporters at the first signs of problems in Canada. "We're not going to do this on the backs of Canadians," says Mackay. "Our industry would be over at that point." CDPA members, who are responsible for about 80 per cent of drug exports to the U.S.—almost all through independent prescribers—have stressed clear of bulk export contracts with U.S. states or states. But other online exporters are sniffing at the opportunity. Opening the market further to U.S. states, or even the Clinton and Wal-Mart of the world, adds Mackay, would be ruinous for export not because Canada simply doesn't have enough drugs to supply that kind of charge in U.S. demand.

As drugs start, CDPA members play a kind of cat-and-mouse game to gather up their own supplies. Blackballed by the drug companies that don't want to undercut themselves, exporters buy extra medicines from other local pharmacies or pharmacies in British Columbia that then fill the order and ship it directly to the customer. The FDA's ban sending cautioning letters to the states and others that want to import in large numbers. And it's been doing open checks at mail-order websites. But so far, no real flow of pieces of mail with individual prescriptions flooding in, regulators are largely overwhelmed—thanks to patients. Bob Debra Hirschman of Oak Park, Calif., 50 km northwest of Los Angeles.

Hirschman, 54, has been disabled and unable to work as a mail carrier for six years. The single mother of a 13-year-old boy sells for him arthritis and chronic pain, among other ailments. She had his Chronic Arthritis, but her monthly premiums shot up from US\$415 to US\$700 between 1997 and last year. She also had to pay a deductible and an additional fee for each prescription. She couldn't afford it.

Hirschman's doctor told her about Universaldrug.com in Winnipeg. She placed her drugs, they took to her local pharmacy to comparison shop. A three-month supply of Lipitor, Trexall for chronic heartburn, Zyrtec for allergies, and Zovirax,



WAITING TO BE JABBED

FACED WITH a nationwide shortage of flu-vaccine injectors, Americans are enduring lengthy lines in pharmacies, medical clinics and seniors' homes. After a four-hour wait, a 79-year-old woman in the San Francisco area collapsed, cracked her head and died. Two others in Concord, Calif., had to be hospitalized after they, too, collapsed. Dr. Rodney Shuman, a New York City oncologist, has been unable to get any vaccine for his 200-cancer patients. Shuman says a Canadian supplier promised him some as long as he doesn't divulge the company's name.

U.S. seniors are waiting for hours. One line in Ohio is waiting for Canada.

Much the same can be said for the many Americans flooding to Canadian border cities. Some private supplies are available at clinics across Canada. But both Alberta and Ontario, for example, have independent health care workers not to use publicly funded vaccine on anyone who does not live or work in the province. Canada has shipped some 18 million doses, about 90 per cent of that by providers for vaccination programs. Throwing out the vaccine into a B.C. travel clinic that has extended its hours for visiting Americans, offering flu shots at \$50 each. B.C. has over 300,000

doses set aside for residents deemed at risk, says Vivian Zamco, a spokeswoman for the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, which oversees the clinic. It's the excess that's been offered visitors. "Whatever visitors are going to Americans," says Zamco, "went at the expense of Canadians."

The U.S. has been caught short of flu vaccines before, but this year is particularly bad. It has only about 60 million doses, just over half of what it requires, and it's been securing the world for fresh supplies. The problem began in August when inspectors for California-based Chiron Corp., one of two vaccine-makers supplying the U.S., conducted tests at its plant in Liverpool, England. Bacterial contamination had

ruined vaccine. Further testing suggested the remaining 45 million doses were fine, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration disagreed, saying it "found significant" deficiencies in quality control. "Chiron wrote off all of its US\$70 million inventory."

Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada's chief public health officer, says Canada's supply can't be used, but not until the new year after all needs are assessed. That will help, but as Shuman's New York says: "I only hope there isn't an epidemic this winter. It could be really bad." D.H.

a missile release, would have cost her US\$1,500—almost three times what Universal charges. Hirschman told the clerk she was considering buying Canadian. Her reaction, recalls Hirschman, was, "Well, it says right here on my manual, don't take it!" Hirschman's reply: "Call the police and have them arrest me. That's what I have to worry about how much anything costs."

In June, the U.S. General Accounting Office released a report that went a long way toward vindicating Canadian online pharmacies. The investigative branch of Congress, the GAO placed 90 orders for 13 different drugs from 68 websites in the United States, Canada and other countries, including India, Pakistan and Thailand. While all 18 Canadian pharmacies required a prescription, only five of the 25 U.S. outlets did. It was worse in the other countries, where all 21 websites did not require a prescription supplied by the patient. The GAO noted most of the drugs from Canada were approved for the U.S. market, but that "the chemical composition of all were comparable to the product we had

KERRY IS making hay out of Bush's sudden willingness to import flu vaccine from Canada in light of the U.S. shortage

ordered." Translated: the drugs were fine.

Provincial regulators license and inspect Canadian online pharmacies, which also follow their own set of safety guidelines. All require a prescription from a U.S. doctor. First-time customers—whether they're online or phoning in an order—are required to complete a medical questionnaire. The pharmacies do not sign off on sales. The pharmacies do not carry controlled substances, including amphetamines, barbiturates (Valium, for example), or narcotics such as cocaine and morphine. CDPA suggests patients look for the provincial pharmacy license number on each website, and phone the province's regulator for confirmation.

Still, not everyone's satisfied with the provision. Physicians' colleges, which regulate doctors' conduct, frown on the practice of signing prescriptions without seeing the patient. Colleges in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New

Brunswick have either fined doctors or issued warnings, or are conducting disciplinary hearings to discourage the practice.

The drug company Novartis has fired some Canadian suppliers to obtain part of their inventory from European countries and other nations with high regulatory standards (but some may be going further afield). Last December, in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Dr. Abigail Zuger noted there's been little evidence of patients being harmed by drugs from Canada. Just one case was made public when an Oregon woman sued Edmonton-based Medicine Shoppe Canada, alleging the Canadian pharmacy sent her the wrong drug. The parties settled out of court. However, the risks could increase, Zuger warned, because drug manufacturers have cut supplies to online exporters, forcing them to seek out inventory from less developed countries where standards are much flatter.

Prescription brand-name medicines for chronic diseases can easily come through US\$2,000 a month. Sometimes that forces patients to take just half their recommended dose, or skip their meds entirely to buy food or pay rent. "There are people's lives at stake," says Ross. "If they don't take drugs, they're not well—and in the next country in the world, that's outrageous."

At 60, Shirley Andagier collects US\$1,000 a year in social security benefits. "If I had no less than that, I couldn't," says Andagier, who is divorced and lives alone. To replace her income, she rents out the kitchen of her home. She takes Fosamax to combat osteoporosis and Xalatan eye drops to prevent glaucoma. As with Hirschman, Andagier's doctor recommended Universaldrug.com in Winnipeg. Andagier now saves 37 per cent on her drug and 42 per cent on the other, making a significant impact on her quality of life. "It means I can take a vacation if I have to, or if the TV breaks down, I get some money back," she says.

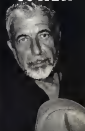
"I'm able to go out and eat with friends, instead of saying, 'Oh, I can't go. I don't have 18 extra dollars.'" Filling health almost always demands that patients pay some kind of financial cost. In the fight for cheaper drugs, Canadians want supplies imported, and Americans ask only for a fair price. □

Filling health almost always demands that patients pay some kind of financial cost. In the fight for cheaper drugs, Canadians want supplies imported, and Americans ask only for a fair price. □

With Leah Weisberg

His songs have been covered throughout the world and have influenced generations of songwriters. Columbia Records is set to release Dear Heather, the eagerly-awaited new album from the legendary singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen. This is Cohen's first release since 2001's critically acclaimed *New Songs*.

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DEAR HEATHER



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COLUMBIA

readership is really worst. But when someone tries to overtake you, you have to show some fighting spirit."

Not only was the Globe incensing enormous amounts of money in the battle, it was also changing its approach to news in hopes of matching the Post's impressive on-air. Suddenly, the Good Guy Globe featured more colour, better photographs and more sports coverage. In an effort to lure younger readers, it hired lifestyle columnists such as gossip columnist Leah McLaren to appear on the merits of Iranian film music. In other words, the Globe was trying to find its niche off-kilter. It didn't always work, but at least Crowley realised a competitive gut the paper had long been missing.

Given the enormous costs of the war to both sides, perhaps it shouldn't have come as a huge surprise when Conrad Black bailed after three years, selling the paper to the Auger family's CanWest Global Communications in 2001. Then, mere weeks after taking over, CanWest handed the Globe its most pivotal victory—slashing several sections and more than 100 jobs from the Post in hopes of curbing financial losses. Its readership plunged, and it has never recovered.

With hindsight, however, it's dear Crowley's winning circulation campaign that came at a grievous cost. In the mid-1990s, just before the Post's debut, the daily had a profit margin of 35 per cent on annual revenues of approximately \$250 million, meaning roughly \$37 million in profit, according to Thorzell. But in the heat of competition, the Globe's bottom line withered away. Crowley refused to provide detailed financial information, saying only that the Globe is a "profitable business" today, and that financial results have improved in each of the past three years. But that declaration isn't as definitive as it sounds. He will not explain how the Globe defines profit, and won't say how much money the paper is reportedly making.

Outsiders are the usual. Three Toronto financial analysts, all of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the business is not as healthy as Crowley claims. Each agreed that the Globe is either making a small amount of money—perhaps \$5 million a year—or is losing about that much. Eventually, the paper appears to be bumping along near the break-even mark.

More concerning still is the notion that the

entire industry's profitability may be permanently impaired by the scorched-earth battle between the two national dailies. The war has changed the economics of the business, inflating what printers charge, what top journalists command, what advertisers demand and what the public is willing to pay for the product. "As long as the Post is in there, there is going to be a huge cost to the whole industry," Thorzell says.

The Globe's corporate insurers at BCE Inc. appear weary of the battle. For the past three years, the paper has been part of Bell



'I DON'T necessarily expect the Post to die,' says Crowley. Coming from him, that's an astonishing admission.

GlobeMedia, majority owned by BCE, with the Thomson family retaining a minority stake. Since new CEO Michael Sabo took over in 2002, it's been an open secret that BCE has been looking to sell GlobeMedia, but the Thomsons finally aren't willing to let go. As a result, BCE is stuck with a business it doesn't want. "My understanding is a sale is off the table for now," one analyst says.

That leaves Crowley looking for ways to decrease what profit he can in a media landscape that is likely to remain as crowded and cutthroat as ever. Recent circulation numbers show slight declines for the Globe's

readership, largely due to the disappearance of car-rate subscriptions and giveaways Crowley has fought to keep spending under control, despite weekly campaigns to lure away key journalists from the Post, including Chrissie Macfarlane, and top editors like Mark Stevenson and David Thomson. But that has meant belt-tightening in the newsroom and fewer free-lance stories. The Globe is also offering voluntary lay-offs to trim its staff, and management recently began reducing the newspaper's page count to save money, such as eliminating stock tables.

Can cost trimming and discipline bring back the day of 15-per-cent profit margin? Not as long as the advertising market remains in a funk and the Post is around trying to pull away what business there is. And that only underscores the importance of Crowley's original, as-yet-unfulfilled mandate.

This has been a tough year for Phillip Crowley. He died in July after long battle with cancer. And though he is clearly showing the fringe of his personal and professional battles, he isn't giving up. At 60, he looks fit and trim, and says he has no plans to retire any time soon. The man who first took on the Post six years ago seems more subdued these days, but he still likes to lob the odd shot at his crosser rival. "On any logical business grounds, if you look at their losses, I think it's pretty clear who lost the war," Crowley says.

What's less clear is who won it. □

above: michael sabo; below: rogers-dawn



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ROGERS



Photo Essay | BY MICHAEL WOLF

HEADING FOR THE BIG TOP

In Wuqiao, circus arts give kids a springboard to success

THEY WAKE AT dawn to begin their training. In Wuqiao, a district of China's Hebei province 250 km south of Beijing, children, some as young as 5, learn circus arts such as acrobatics, juggling and magic. The promise is a grand career with international fame and fortune is awaiting. But first these children must complete a grueling six-year program, for which the competition is fierce, and in which the training is long and intense.

Alarms of the Wuqiao program can be found in troupes throughout China and around the world. The region is known as the birthplace of Chinese acrobats as some 12,000 of the area's 275,000 residents consider themselves artists and performers, something that has run in some families for generations. "Everybody in Wuqiao, from toddlers to 99 year olds, can perform at least a few acrobatic tricks," says one local.

For the children enrolled in the program, handspins and one-man-ops are essential skills to be brushed up every day. The complex techniques are often hazardous as accidents are commonplace, and many students have scars and bruises that bear witness to the difficulty of what they endure, in the hope of a better life.



MEN UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Three tales of intoxication give a fresh kick to classic formulas

WILLIAM BLAKE WROTE that "the root of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." And here are three new movies that seem determined to prove him right. With budgets ranging from \$150,000 to \$44 million, they're vastly different in scale, but all bring new zest to vintage genres. *Ray*, the latest in a series of Ray Charles biopics, takes the formula of a rags-to-riches biopic with gun-run fuel. *Subversy* takes the bachelor-real movie poster look, to California wine country. And a tiny Canadian flick, *It All Happens Sexually First*, reopens the lost-to-space-podcasters-with-a-reel-of-characters-tugged-in-and-out-of-hours

Ray is one of those rare instances where Hollywood goes it right. Arriving five months after his death, at 73, it chronicles Charles with astonishing fidelity and power. The movie comes from director Taylor Hackford, who's best known for high-gloss romance (*An Officer and a Gentleman*, *Against All Odds*), but he's made two previous music films, the *Boyz n the City* biopic *Ra Ra Ra* and Chuck Berry's *Real Gone* '68 'Back in 'Ain'.

For Hackford, Ray celebrates a 13-year obsession, and he's the subject served in as and participant. Before his death, Charles re-recorded a number of old hits for the movie. After an auction of dueling photos, he also invented James Pate for the lead role—a gifted pianist, the actor (like Charles) began playing at age 3. And it's Pate's performance that makes this movie soar. Lay spicing to Charles's vocals, he's so convincing that you forget you're not watching Ray himself. It helps that the character wears sunglasses and has such distinct mannerisms. But Pate's Oscar-caliber score de force goes beyond inspiration.

The film anchors the story in the Southern childhood of a boy who grows up dirt poor and is blind from glaucoma by the age of 7, two years after watching his brother drown in an accident that will forever haunt him. Setting out to make his fortune as a singer at 17, Charles scores his breakthrough in 1954 with *Gotta Woman*—a scorching mix of gospel and blues that invites charges of blasphemy for blurring the line between religious song and sensuality. The movie portrays him as a fiercely independent pioneer who boycotts segregated clubs, and a savvy businessman who was surprised to find money from his blind. The best scenes

are in the recording studio, where the pianist rolls off his fingers—from the organic *What I Say*, recorded in a flash of spontaneity, to the country crossover of *Georgia on My Mind*. The singer's giddy promiscuity—he had 12 children—and his heroin habit, are presented without moral judgment. After his drug bust in 1965, Charles finally quit junk, but only because it's hurting his career. Where the movie does get heavy-handed is in framing the story with shoe-thrappy flashbacks to the pain of his childhood. But Touchstone honors Charles' spirit with such veracity that the character is immune to Hollywood overkill.

Subversy is more unassuming fare. But of all the movies that came at the recent Toronto International Film Festival, including

Ray, this ambrosial comedy provided the most unalloyed pleasure. Based on a novel by Ken Pitlor, it bears the oblique signature of American writer Alexander Payne (*Citizen Ruth*, *Electra*, *About Schmidt*), whose talent seems to have come into its own. *Subversy* is a bit more full-bodied, and grander, than *Ray*.

It's an odd couple of two mid-life losers, both beset with failures in their own right. Duall Guarnati (*Amusement*) plays Miles, a nebbish writer who's been crushed by a divorce and is unable to find a publisher for his manuscript on soul. The Day After Tomorrow's Thomas Haden Church (*Wings*) plays his old college buddy, Jack, a hard-boiled but smug-up TV actor who (like Church himself) is always recognized as "that guy" from a distant career. Jack's determined to get laid before getting married. And that's his mission when, a week before the wedding, Miles takes him on a road trip through the Santa Ynez Valley to meet wine and watch golf balls.

Miles is a wise geek who can deconstruct a bottle of pinot noir as if it were a *Shogun*

episode set in Jack, who treats wine as a lubricant, a happy go puzzle whatever he's looking at. Along the way, women enter the equation, Jack meets the wine-tasting Staphura, a motorcycle-riding free spirit—played by the director's wife, Canadian actor Sandra Oh—while neglecting to mention he's engaged. Miles gingerly backs into a romance with a waitress named Maya (Virginia Madsen), who shares his love of wine. You wonder how such losers can attract smart, sexy women who are so clearly out of their league (that is a gross-dance scene for male film geeks). But at least the filmmaker seems aware of the irony, and the men are such engaging characters they're likable in spite of themselves.

As Miles, Guarnati creates a word-rich portrait of overcompensation. Possessing a perceptive intelligence he can't quite control, he approaches sex with rational devotion. When he procures a bottle "brighter than a match and hot [with] good concentration," he could be talking about himself. Jack, meanwhile, is an easy-going blend of confidence and charm. And as Miles tries to seduce his male pal, the film assumes a metaphoric knowing of affection, while embracing wine as a universal metaphor. In one blissful scene, the alcohol overflows the front, and the straggles goes right into the window as Miles turns into an unconvincing drunk—gazing from the open barrel at a tasting bar, then dumping over his head.

Subversy is the kind of movie you wish Woody Allen would still make—until you realize it's happily free of the baroque angst that men even Allen's best work. *Purse* allows his characters to be themselves and speak in their own voices. The result is an unusually mature tale of male insecurity, and the best buddy movie in years.

It All Happens Sexually First is an object lesson in how to make a modest movie in Canada. Forget wine country. Writer-director Joe DiStasio takes the whole thing in a Toronto bar, the Duke of Gloucester, for \$150,000. He used to work there. Drawing on his experience, he's forged a suspenseful thriller about a group of regulars who linger in the bar after closing time and have their world shattered by a violent invasion. As they wait for the police, with a body on the floor, a mysterious insider (Miriam Oren) leads them hostage with riddling games.



Guarnati and Church take a cerebral tour through wine country—and mid-life angst

Unfolding in real time, this disaster-apocalyptic tale—psychological horror with jobs of dark humor—has the dreamy realism of an urban legend. Once says he conceived of the bar as a spaceship that's been invaded.

by an Allen-like producer. With no public funding, a snub from the Toronto festival and scant distribution, his film lacks polish. At times it feels more like a play. But with a strong local cast, including Tannis Hickey and Suzanne Scotch, it has a vitality that makes more Canadian films that cost 20 times as much.



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Ray embodies Charles's spirit so intensely that the character is immune to Hollywood overkill

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SURVIVOR

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in a big-city
shantytown



shaughnessy bishop-stall

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joy to read.
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heartbreaking,
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Television | BY PAUL WELLS

OTTAWA MOST FOUL

In an ambitious thriller, intrigue drenches the capital

ABOVE prime minister of Canada dies on a crime trip. His joyrider son delivers a stirring eulogy at the funeral. The reason is written with the prospect of somebody young and passionate in the big job. The young man rides a groundswell of popular support—and the devoted counsel of a few hard-core insiders—all the way to 24 Sussex.

Once he's in charge, there is intrigue. There is a plan for mass exports of water to the Yukon. There is a health care bill to pay for. There is a reformed Quebec separatist—or is he reformed?—at the Cabinet table. There are murders. There are yucky episodes. There are many, many clandestine meetings atop the Ottawa canal locks, not renowned before now as a political hot spot. There is a Quebec premier who seems oddly willing to hop a plane to Ottawa whenever somebody wants to chat with him.

It's not real life, in other words. It's television. *11/26*, the antithesis, two-part CBC miniseries from *Due South* star Paul Gross, air on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1. In many ways, *11/26* is just a political potboiler. The ingredients stewing in the pot are familiar: the Trudeau legends, Justin Trudeau's eulogy, Jean Lapierre's return to government from the wilderness of the Bloc Québécois, a scheming press hound who uses his print and broadcast propensities to advance his political agenda, and Musée d'Art Moderne's assorted nightmares about American corporate incursions against Canadian sovereignty.

Gross and his writing partner, John Krusec, combine it all with undeniable panache. And Charles Binamé, the producer, Quebec director Gross hired to helm the project, ensures the proceedings look gorgeous. The big question, which only TV viewers can answer, is whether there's an audience for entertainment that sticks so close to newspaper headlines.

Certainly in Ottawa—where Gross has been a frequent visitor shooting and then presenting *11/26*—members of the press gallery have engaged in competitive eyeballing over the preposterous notion that



Canadian politics could be thrilling enough to serve as fuel for a political thriller. But if the writers came out, they'd miss a thriller that's thrilling precisely because it unwaveringly dips into the realm of the preposterous.

11/26 also tells water experts is precisely the same way *The Day After Tomorrow* was about global warming. Both films dispatch with the technical stuff in a few terse tell-me-does-it-as-is, "Well, doctor, precisely how is it that this plot device works?" "Well, this chart should explain it!" and hurry straight to the much more exciting business of running, firing, snubbing and sweating.

Plot twists are frequent enough to be satisfying. The ex-separatist, played by Guy Nadon as a ramped bear of a man who as first seems way out of his depth, slowly awakens as he unspools his Martha Henry turns in a gloriously humane performance as the older PM's distraught kook of a widow.

And Gross's accidental junior PM? I won't spoil things by saying too much, but he's oddly attractive, because the head of government has a plan and a big idea. Which is how you know you're watching fiction. **B**



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Books | BY BRIAN BERGMAN



ROCK AND HOLY ROLLERS

A troubled Mennonite heroine captivates the world

IT'S A HOT Canadian author at Calgary's annual WordFest—orange-tinted interview with, and read-ins by, authors such as Stuart Swan, Paul Quarmby and Greg Hellingreid. But the star of the evening is Margaret Norman Tovey, whose latest novel, *A Complicated Kindness*, is a natural beauty and is charming for the prestigious Giller Prize. In the book, Tovey adopts the voice of Norm Nickel, the confused and cynical teenage protagonist. Norm is trapped in the small

town of East Village, whose mother and sister have fled their hometown with her.

town of East Village, a tiny, degraded stand-in for Steinbach, Man., the strict Mennonite community where the writer, 40, spent her formative years. "Main Street," Tovey begins reading, "is as dead as ever. There's a blinding white light at the waxy-powder end of it and Joyce standing in the centre of it in a pale blue robe with his arms out, palms

up, like he's seeing how the hell would I know? I'm just a carpenter. He looks like George Harrison in his Eastern religion period working for *Laughing Brothers*."

Laughter fills the hall. The slender blond Tovey, who has a quippy, self-deprecating way about her, smiles as if to leave the stage, mission accomplished. Of course, she doesn't. Instead, Tovey continues reading from a chapter that neatly encompasses many of the novel's key themes and characters, including Norm's mother and sister, who have already fled East Village, as well as her uncle, a grim preacher who polices the town's morals and whom Norm refers to as *The Mouth of Darkness*. There's even a Mennonite joke, playing on the fact that nearly everyone in East Village is somehow related: "If a Mennonite couple divorces do they still get to be cousins?"

Imagine Holden Caulfield as a Mennonite, and a girl, and you get a pretty good idea of the tone and content of *A Complicated Kindness* (but it's likely no accident, since *The Catcher in the Rye* is one of the books that inspired Tovey as an adolescent). And while

Tovey's quick pace that her breakthrough novel—the author's third—was a work of fiction, there are some striking similarities between Norm's story and her own.

The novel is set in 1986, when Norm is 16, precisely the age Tovey was that year. Norm rebels against the structures of her community (Mennonites are supposed to be traditionalists, and the more conservative factions frown upon such simple worldly pleasures as dancing or going to the movies). Norm skips school, hangs out all night at the East Village gravel pit with other teenagers, drinks and smokes cigarettes and drugs. Tovey did all of the above—to a lesser extent than Norm—in Steinbach, then a community of nearly 3,000, 60 km south-east of Winnipeg. Norm divorces of course, actually to New York City. Tovey left Steinbach at 18, after graduating high school. She lived in Montreal and London and travelled around Europe before settling in Winnipeg, where she still lives with her husband, Neil Rempel, executive producer of

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Books | >

the Winnipeg International Children's Festival. Between them, they have three kids, ages 14, 18 and 20 (the oldest is Rumpolt's by an earlier marriage).

Over a glass of wine in an upscale Calgary bar, Tews' intention to point out that, unlike Norm, she was protected from the harshest aspects of community life by her parents, who were well-educated and relatively liberal (her father was a schoolteacher and her mother a registered nurse and, later, a family therapist). But she had plenty of opportunity to observe a fundamentalist element in the town that still thrives as an insular, judgmental and focused on the province of the next life. In the novel, Norm complains that "people here person wait to die, it seems. It's the main event. The only reason we're not all struffed at birth is because the world induces our suffering by a lifetime." Similarly, Tews recalls that, as a teen, "I wanted to belong to an Indian family and dance at family gatherings and have a glass of wine. Other cultures seemed so much more vibrant, forgiving, fun."

Tews, who describes herself as "a messaged woman towards the other side," has deeply conflicted feelings about her hometown. On the one hand, she finally recalls her only childhood as a time when everyone knew each other and she had a sense of belonging that she never off to the west wanted to see how people were sometimes discriminated by the more conservative church authorities, then divided by their neighbours, for offences such as drinking or marrying outside the faith. For Tews, the toughest contradiction of all comes from her father, Mel Tews, who was estranged since at 62 after suffering from bipolar disorder his entire adult life. Part of her still blames her dad's death on his alcohol (she still feels, inside), even when he felt compelled to hide his illness out of shame. But she also recognizes that his alcoholism left her father financially ruined, a Sunday church service—partly the strength to carry on when others might have faltered.

Twenty before he died, Mel Tews was proud one word to his daughter which broke her heart: "Nothing accomplished." She couldn't bear his assertion that he'd wasted his life—wishes only to prove him wrong. In 2000, Tews published a memoir, *Being Low A Life*, in which she tells her dad's story as the first person, assuming his voice. His memoirs hit initial ground on 17, when a

psychiatrist suggested he wouldn't be able to hold a job, get married or raise a family. He did all three, though, took tremendous self-power. At school, Mel Tews was a lively and beloved teacher, at home, he often hosted two prolonged brooding sabbaths, punctuated by periods of music activity. All the same, Minors remembers him as a man of humour and compassion who clearly loved his wife and children. Which is why she doesn't miss any of the threats that typically surround a family member's suicide. "Keeping this book fresh, regarding it as a beautiful thing—Glenne how beautiful that kind of silence is," she says. "I wanted his life to be known and honored."

Tews's candour about her father is matched by the way she takes on cultural shibboleths, the ways about Memorates the way Maclean's Bookers did about Jews—with humour, affection and a sharp eye for



A Complicated Kindness
by Miriam Tews
Editor: Peter Macleod
Random House of Canada, \$29.95

hypocrisy. In *A Complicated Kindness* we hear of gentile Memorates writing out a war while buying up land from the cheap from the west of soldiers fighting overseas. The book also reaches those who drink on the "An embarrassing situation for wealthy Memorates is to meet other wealthy Memorates in the town up here at the Hanukkah Holiday Inn."

Blubber often takes risk from fellow Jews. Does that sort of thing happen to Jews? "Jews are way more racist," she says, laughing. "I'm someone conservative Memorates don't like." But the whole Memorates thing is utterly dangerous. And I'm used to it."

The success of *A Complicated Kindness*, which was recently published in the United States and Britain to glowing reviews, is welcome affirmation for someone who has traded in relative obscurity, juggling the demands of being a writer and a mom. Not that it's likely to go to the author's head. "I'm just trying to enjoy this," says Tews, before the old Memorates banishes looks in "you know, the old, 'It's going to make my new life really hard to stomach.'"

Over to You | BY CATRY JONES



HOW I LEARNED TO GO WILD

All it took was a canoe trip through Canada's magnificent boreal forest

NOT SO LONG AGO, I thought paddling down an untamed river in remote wilderness was far past me. "Phillips" (Guys who know unimpeachable things about products you have to get at Mountain Equipment Co-op [I thought "wilderness" was figure of speech).

All that has changed, however, thanks to an invitation by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society to join them at the summer of 2003 on an extraordinary wilderness adventure in northwestern Ontario for a paddle down the Rivers River. Now I don't know how they arranged the perfect weather and the northern lights. I don't have a clue who

negotiated the time that held off the mosquitoes all night long. But they get it right—thanks—over though, to be honest, I am a little bit disappointed that I didn't get to wear the frisky mosquito jacket. What the hell, with my boots, it was probably just as well.

The society is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to protecting Canada's boreal forest region. Of course, I had no idea we were all a boreal forest, never mind where or what it was. And I'm not alone: So to help raise awareness of the northern forests and their importance to all of us, the society was one of the leading forces behind the Boreal Wilderness. That included taking 10 groups, which included journalists, artists, musicians, hockey legends and scientists, to guide a number of Canada's great northern rivers. (Tales of our various adventures are featured in a new book, *Boreal Wilderness*.)

With the Wild, which is being launched this month across the country.) "Let me say Canada has one of the largest rivers in the world right in its own backyard. Who knew? Boreal may have the Amazonian jungle but we have the boreal. It's a complex ecosystem of wetlands and woods, where every thing from rare, fragile lichens and orchids to towering spruce and poplars grow. It covers more than half of our country like a big green ribbon from Newfoundland and Labrador to Yukon. And it still teems with wildlife. In television watching language, it's where you would drive three St. Andrews much during "cubaplay"—if you were allowed to drive those. Which you

aren't. So forget it—and get a small one!"

Hitting the boreal means you have to sweat upon dashes made out of pebbles (don't ask: It's something to do with them being threaded, hole and run into fabric that does it if you get it). Of course, I had never all of my polyester in the '70s. But unless you were to be checked right off the rocks and maybe slip in the water and get eaten by a giant leech, you better not turn up with any natural fibres on, baby!

To get to that region of northwestern



Ontario, you fly to Manitowish. Go figure. From Winnipeg, I travelled back to Red Lake, Ont., where I met up with the rest of the paddlers who would help me keep my nose pointed in the right direction for the next 10 days. During a short, truly marvellous stopover in Red Lake, we were joined by elders and community leaders from Mikanaquang First Nation, whose traditional territory includes the Boreal. They had travelled more than 100 km to give us their blessing. I was thrilled to meet them and happy to learn they like Joe Coon, the Aboriginal character I sometimes parody

on CBC TV's *Tim Allen* (see 22 Minutes).

Next came a trip in a vintage Norstrom float plane (you "float" over 700 km upriver). I think the floatplane was cardboard—which is cool and a little way to cool. Because when it comes to planes I tend to be the "I sure hope it was built sometime in the last 50 years" school. But it was exhilarating up there, and from the air we could see that the great Canadian bush looks more like a crazy patchwork of clear-cut and roads. Then suddenly the clear-cut ended and the road stopped and all we could see were moss, and lakes, and rivers, and mountains. We had crossed the line between the industrial forest of the south and the wild-west north.

Before long, I was pushing tennis and paddling for hours—enduring through allegedly "modern" Chippewas. On our fifth day, we stopped at Milliken Falls (Ojibwa name: Pawaing in Ojibwa), a spectacular cultural and ecological site. As the water tumbled over the rock ledges, we experienced the healing and energizing power of a Mikanaquang message. Nothing compares to it.

Our Boreal journey ended at the community of Pikangikum, where we shared in a feast generously provided by the Mikanaquang people to celebrate the

signing of a co-operation agreement with conservation groups. The deal affirms their goal to protect forever the wild and rich cultural character of the lands and waters we had just paddled through. Every Canadian should sign this agreement, at least in spirit. Boreal rivers and waters are the lifeblood of Canada's boreal forest. And, as I've discovered, marvellous as experience by once. So come on, Canada—go get some polyester and go boreal next summer.

Catry Jones is an award-winning writer, actor and comedian who lives in New Orleans. To connect with her, visit catryjones.com.



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BACKTALK

John Intini's Sentences 52 | Bestsellers List 52 | Money's Worth 54



What's two million CDs, if you can't get into the cool parties?

These five guys have a simple phrase: wear black, wear belts, rock the world.

The guys in Simple Plan are well known for how they treat the celebrity media. "There are a lot of people out there still saying 'Simple what?'" admits front man Pierre Bouvier, 25. "A couple months ago, we tried to get into L.A.'s Skybar even though we weren't on the list. A friend of mine said to the bouncer, 'Hey man, these guys are in Simple Plan.' The bouncer just looked at us and said, 'I don't care. If you're not on the guest list, go to some other—any club!'"

This helps explain the rise of the Montreal rockers' sophomore CD, *Still Not Getting Any*. And despite selling two million copies of their

2002 debut, the quietest—Bouvier, Chuck Comeau, 25; Jeff Ginsco, 26; Sylvain Lefebvre, 25, and David Desrosiers, 24—don't like themselves publicly. After all, they made their "facing" debut in *New York Minute*, starring teenboppers Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. "We never saw her doing any stuff," says guitarist Lefebvre, referring to tabloid rumors that Mary-Kate has a cocaine addiction. Bouvier jokes, "I didn't know we had that in common." Nor that he'll get a chance to bond with the *First Wives Club* anyone soon. For now, Simple Plan's still on the wrong side of the velvet rope.

JOHN INTINI

BUZZ LIST

ONE SHOT, ONE KISS
If you're looking for a story about the love of the Montreal band—everyone in New York City is.

SIMPLE PLAN
The first season was fancy, really.

THAT 'TWO SHOW'
The first season was fancy, really.

MAN, POWER BRIDE
It's a love story about a woman who is a descendant of a powerful family.

SUPERMAN RETURNS

The first season was fancy, really. The first season was fancy, really.



ANY AND EVERYONE
The first season was fancy, really. The first season was fancy, really.

JOHN INTINI

The first season was fancy, really. The first season was fancy, really.





Sandra Oh finishes John Intini's sentences

Sandra Oh has quietly become one of Canada's biggest screen stars—quite a feat considering she's spent most of her career in supporting roles. The *Hopeless*, *Outcast*, *L.A.-based* therapist, who once dreamed of being a ballerina, is currently co-starring in *Sideways*—a comedy directed by her husband Alexander Payne—and in David Mackenzie's Canadian film *Milly Wonderful*, with Paul Giamatti. Oh, 34, recently finished Mackenzie's Assistant Editor Jake Miller's sentences.

THE DAY THAT MY BALLET SHOES RAN FOR GOOD... usually? It was 12, but I kept going until I was 30.

IDEAL WITH REJECTION... trying to my husband. I have to make right out

of theatre school, but then you end up waiting tables for a while. It takes a lot. DRIVING AN AMERICAN TRUCK... is something I can't do. I stick to imports. Except in Colorado, they make good beer. FINDING ROLES FOR A KOREAN WOMAN... is a little piece of fury. I'm not offended when cast as Christine because of going white; you can play British, Polish, Jewish and French. I need the freedom to go between Chinese, Korean and Japanese.

MY PARENTS WOULD HAVE PREFERRED I become a journalist or an politician. I was never good at math and science, but they knew I liked to talk.

FOR MORE "JOHN INTINI'S SENTENCES" VISIT WWW.MAGLEANS.COM/PEOPLE

NEARLY 500,000 AMERICAN voters And voters voted in Rockefeller's website election. The results: John Kerry beat George W. Bush by 54 per cent.

Books | First Nations, first encounters

Our Story is a collection of short fiction by star Indigenous writers debuting from their perspective—visions that project an Indigenous history. It's another important idea from the Dominion Institute, a leading player in English Canada's renewed interest in the past. Before yet, the concept works, in some cases brilliantly. One of the lesser-known authors, Montreal-based Rachel Gosselin, offers a subtle tale of a 16th-century 1,000-year-old woman, must and Tami to long-legended Anishinabe. More prominent contributors match Gosselin's effort. Toronto's Carolyn Soris about her journey, must and Tami to long-legended Anishinabe. More prominent contributors match Gosselin's effort. Toronto's Carolyn Soris about her journey, must and Tami to long-legended Anishinabe. More prominent contributors match Gosselin's effort. Toronto's Carolyn Soris about her journey, must and Tami to long-legended Anishinabe.

OUR STORY: Rachel Gosselin, Carolyn Soris, and Tami to long-legended Anishinabe. More prominent contributors match Gosselin's effort. Toronto's Carolyn Soris about her journey, must and Tami to long-legended Anishinabe.

Best Sellers

Fiction	WEEKS ON LIST
1. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
2. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
3. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
4. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
5. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
6. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
7. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
8. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
9. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
10. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1

Non-fiction

1. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
2. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
3. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
4. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
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8. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
9. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1
10. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje	1

1. THE INVENTION OF SOLIDITY by Michael Ondaatje

Shanda Zeisel | ON HALLOWEEN



So, what are you gonna be?

Your trick-or-treating days are over, but the pressure to dress up is as strong as ever

ON HALLOWEEN 2000 I ran into Hal Johnson and Joanne MacLeod of Rudy Brink. We're not the real hosts of the 90-second dinner commercials, but a couple dressed up as them. We're not the real hosts of the 90-second dinner commercials, but a couple dressed up as them. We're not the real hosts of the 90-second dinner commercials, but a couple dressed up as them. We're not the real hosts of the 90-second dinner commercials, but a couple dressed up as them.

Headed costumes don't scare anyone, and showing up in an old men's dinner, women's clothing, a hat or a white towel through the head—no harm. It's not going to make you any new friends or win you \$20,000 at Vancouver's legendary Masquedale. Last year we gave a prize to a guy who built an entire house around himself. Says Ken McNeill, of 284-5, the radio station that throws the party "The door of the house was open and his car was showing. He had made flags, so it looked like he was sitting on the seat. His movement was really graceful and he couldn't get into the car of the woman who, considering he was in an antique, was pretty funny."

Max Pertheville, a carpenter in Ottawa, is an other guy who goes all in. He's been a lobster, a race and one of the old \$13 bills, for which he grew his hair out like John A. Macdonald, donned a purple blazer and then mounted a blown-up photograph of the bill behind him. His personal Halloween scariest moment was Gaddafi, a seven-foot-tall chicken wire and paper-on-the construction with moving parts, that took him two months to build. When he got to the door on Halloween night, the house or almost turned him away, claiming the costume was a fire hazard. "It's definitely a gross thing," says Pertheville, 33. "Anyone who spends a lot of time and effort does it because people are really appreciative. They thank you for having such a good costume. You don't have to know anyone—you just walk into a room and people are like, 'Hey, it's the lobster!'"

That sounds like a blast, but what if the costume pieces aren't flowing at the manna machine paper mache aren't available? Well, there's always that guy. Go to the Tim Hortons tape pop cam to yourself and go as a human wedding machine. There are plenty of outrageous but simple costumes at www.audible.com. For these dead set again dressing up, at least follow the advice of Adam Sedler, Saturday Night Live's former Halloween columnist. "Just use your own T-shirt. Coat Crazy One. Armed Man," he said, stuffing an arm into his shirt. "Hey, look at me! I got one arm, and I'm crazy! Now give me some candy!"

To connect: Shanda Zeisel is a writer for www.audible.com



Wheels | It's like folding a bike

Folding a bike isn't quite as easy as riding one—but it's becoming a popular alternative. Long, commutable in Europe and Japan, where living spaces are tight, compactable bicycles have hit Canada. Folding slightly more than a normal bike, these contraptions fold or telescope, in the case of Concord. One-based bikes (they're not) to the size of a small suitcase. They're popular with apartment dwellers. "And baby boomers," adds Bikes' Steve Kishall. "They're traveling more and have limited space." But of all, this new toy won't take up much room in the garage with all of last year's trendy gadgets. **KARIN MAGUIRE**

Web | To be heard, not read

With the Internet and logging their own and newspapers are two new weekly for the bus, you might want to check out www.audible.com, which has the Internet's largest selection of downloadable audio services, it's like books on tape without the tapes. Instead, audio services of your favorite reading material—no cassette tapes—can be downloaded to your computer and then downloaded to a portable CD player. The site also offers "podcasts" subscriptions from the New York Times and the Washington Post, as well as access to U.S. radio programs. Available also offers free versions of the presidential debate. That is, if your ears can take it. **K.M.**

Money's Worth | Sake and sake drinks

Brands multiply as exotic brew heats up again

If you missed it the first time, Japan's national drink is making a comeback in North America. Often referred for wine due to its high alcohol content, sake (see fact) is beer made from fermented rice. A wide range of the potent, which dates as far back as 490 BC, is now available on store shelves, from premium varieties imported for the choicest sophisticated to gut-burning brands comparable to Scotch. The drink is gaining enough fans to make sake

cocktails a growing trend at hip downtown restaurants (skip top-grade varieties if making these at home as the flavour will drown in the mix) and to sport sparkling sake beverages served at the wine-cool crowd. A tip to the novice: High-end sake, made from top-grade polished rice, should be served chilled, while the table varieties—especially those with added alcohol—are often heated to make versions of *flavor*. (BIRCH 4-022)



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Personal bottle sizes, no alcohol added. Alcohol 0%.

Traditional non-premium. Alcohol 14-15%.

FLAVOUR

Floral scents with melon and fresh flower. Creamy texture. Smooth, tangy taste—perfect for sipping. It is light on the palate, with a long finish. Slightly yellowish colour.

A crisp taste but a delicate one. It is light on the palate, with a long finish. Slightly yellowish colour. It is light on the palate, with a long finish. Slightly yellowish colour.

More a subtle drink than a real sake. It is light on the palate, with a long finish. Slightly yellowish colour. It is light on the palate, with a long finish. Slightly yellowish colour.

The only one of the group. It is light on the palate, with a long finish. Slightly yellowish colour. It is light on the palate, with a long finish. Slightly yellowish colour.

RECOMMENDATION

After dinner drink or for sipping at a cocktail party. Serve chilled.

Drinking on its own or with light meals.

Party drink or a cooler substitute. Not suggested as a replacement to food.

Special drinks. Serve warm. Middle of the day drink during the afternoon.

RATING OUT OF 5 STARS

★★★★

★★★★

★★★★

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OTTAWA HALLUCINATIONS

Watching Question Period can sometimes be like a really bad trip

I ONCE HAD a colleague who combined Aryan rigor in the organisation of his work space with a fondness for the consumption of recreational pharmaceuticals. The result, visitors to his home told, was a strange experience. The environment was a grotesque's ode to the night side even as elephants swooped through the air and pour bean nibbled out of your ears.

I thought of my colleague the other day as I attended Question Period in the House of

Commons. Here too, organisation fights a losing battle with hallucination.

Paul Martin's ministers arrived loaded for bear with the latest information-management tools. Big Alcock, the Treasury Board president, had a flat-panel computer the size of a pizza tray in front of him. Jean Lapierre, the transport minister, tapped happily with a stylus at the screen of his own hyperbroidal deep-dish PDA.

Pierre Pettigrew proffered low tech. The foreign affairs minister surveyed a set of recipe cards, each on a different length and a reamed with tabs so any note would be a thumb's flick away. Judy Sjo, the foreign minister, had a binder with two parallel colour-coded rows of nested cards, white on the left, blue on the right.

Nothing can make such file-defies-usage a question nobody has prepared for. Unhappily, in politics that's the kind you may slyly get.

When, for instance, is the biggest danger to Paul Martin?

Not in Liberals' cards, but in themselves. Scattered in the Liberal caucus has it that the most dangerous votes may not belong to the MPs arranged against the Prime Minister to the opposition benches. Little, some Liberals who saw Martin as their moral ticket are frustrated to see him consorting with strangers on their caucus. Lapierre Public Works Minister Scott Brison Health Minister Orlin Downard Social Development Minister Ken Dryden.

An invisible litigator, a once-time "boy,



a washed-up New Democrat and an hockey legend. Hardcore kids all, but not a pillar of Liberals among them. If you've waited since 1995 for a cabinet job and you're still on the backbench, it means to realize that when Martin promoted fresh faces, he wasn't picturing pots. MPs without recipe cards to keep them busy may turn to less conservative activities. Like revolt.

Of course, rebels need a hot issue. Here's one: who speaks for Canada?

Back in February, when Martin claimed his "different view" about Quebec's place in Canada led Jean Chrétien to cut him out of the loop on national unity matters, a few people (okay, it was me) invited Martin to explain those ideas before confusion gave way to acrimony. The Prime Minister denied against it. Confusion obligingly gave way to acrimony.

I have been amazed by the number of Liberals who are privately flummoxed at the notion of "asymmetrical federalism" in

the September health care accord. It's neither a new idea nor unique to Canada; Google "asymmetrical federalism" and see. But even Goss who thought they could live with that concept have been appalled by news that Quebec's premier plans a trade mission to Mexico with the prime minister of France. Again, not a new idea. Google "paradiplomacy" and see.

But no tolerance for oddly shaped federalism can stretch as far as the Prime Minister and his friends seem to want to pull it. Liza Fiala, the heritage minister, suggested that Quebec's culture minister could actually represent all Canadians at the occasional foreign meeting. [On this, at least, the Liberals aren't backsliding.] When I wrote here a few weeks ago about provinces taking over foreign affairs, I thought it was sure. I can't keep up with this stuff.

Stephen Harper can. Just as the Liberals approached the centenary of the island, the Conservative leader beat them to it by tag-teaming that Canada model in federal political space on the Belgium example. Generally, Belgium-style federalism is an attractive, Belgium-style newsmen or as attractive as Cuba-style newsmen or as attractive as government ethics. Harper cheerfully admitted that he knew better in Belgium and said he was merely searching for new ideas. What problem was he seeking to address? How would a new set of overlapping jurisdictions help? Hey—the man said he's suffering ideas, not answers.

Why is reform of the federation suddenly a hot topic? The answer is no answerer's computer. It's sitting a few seats to Harper's left, in the impressive ranks of Bill C-44's NDP. Every party—the NDP is no exception either—has decided the time can only go down. They are coarser to pick up seats in Quebec they cannot pin in their hands to think or explain themselves. Where will it all end? That question is in Pierre Pettigrew's recipe card either.

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